

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED)
Historic Variance
BZH-27950

Date: November 19, 2013

Applicant: The Estate of Kathryn L. Nelson

Address of Property: 131 Oak Grove Street

Project Name: Historic Variance to use the property as a single-family dwelling

Contact Person and Phone: Amy Ruzick, 651-492-1044

CPED Staff and Phone: John Smoley, 612-673-2830

Date Application Deemed Complete: September 30, 2013

Appeal Period Expiration: December 2, 2013

End of 60-Day Decision Period: November 29, 2013

End of 120-Day Decision Period: January 28, 2014

Ward: 7

Neighborhood Organization: Loring Park

Proposed Use: Single-Family Dwelling

Concurrent Review: N/A

BACKGROUND

On April 1, 2011, the City Council designated the Henry E. Ladd House as an individually designated historic landmark. Constructed in 1889 by W.D. Lewis for Henry Ladd, the subject property is historically significant for its embodiment of Richardsonian Romanesque architecture, its association with master architect Harry Wild Jones, its association with prominent realtor Henry Ladd, and its representation of Loring Park's brief tenure as Minneapolis' home for upper class families.

DESCRIPTION

The Ladd House is a 2.5 story residence designed in the Richardsonian Romanesque style by Harry Wild Jones and built by W.D. Lewis for Henry E. Ladd in 1889 at a cost of \$18,000. Nearly every exterior feature is carved from tan Kasota limestone. The building's complex, composition shingle-covered roof of hips, gables, parapets, and a turret is the most notable exception, though bracketed, narrow eaves are comprised of this Mankato stone. An open porch curves around the northern and eastern sides of the home. The porches flat roof is supported by Doric columns set atop a simple stone

balustrade set in a grid pattern. The columnar pattern is repeated in mullions of select window groupings around the home. Aluminum storm windows obscure the primary fenestration.

PROPOSED CHANGES

The prospective owner of the property wishes to use the building as a single-family dwelling. The property is zoned OR3, Institutional Office Residential District and is located in the DP, Downtown Parking Overlay District and the SH, Shoreland Overlay District. Single-family dwellings are not permitted in the OR3 zoning district. The proposal requires a historic variance, rather than a zoning variance, because the Zoning Code does not permit use variances.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Staff has received one comment letter from the neighborhood group expressing their support for the proposal.

HISTORIC VARIANCE

Before recommending approval of a historic variance, the commission shall make findings that the variance is:

- a) Compatible with the preservation of the property and with other properties in the area, and;
- b) That the variance is necessary to alleviate undue hardship due to special conditions or circumstances unique to the property and not created by the applicant.

The Ladd House, constructed in 1889, was originally used as the single-family dwelling of Henry E. Ladd: a prominent realtor. The applicant wishes to return the building to its original use, which is highly compatible with the preservation of the property. Although the home has not been used as a single-family dwelling for over forty years, few alterations need to be made to convert the home back to a residential use. In 1936 plumbing and electrical work enabled the building to be used, at least in part, for a tea shop, but no noticeable remnants of this use remain. In 1972 the building was converted for use as a care center. Room partitioning, door fixture changes, air conditioning, and emergency lights and exist signs are the most apparent changes resulting from this time period. Reversing these alterations can likely be done with minimal effect to the property's historic character, although no reversal is required.

Furthermore, the proposal will not damage the character of other properties in the area. The proposed use is less intense than the previous institutional use onsite and will result in no additional demands for on-street parking. Granting this request will actually help restore the character of this street, where thirty-two of the thirty-six single-family dwellings in existence in 1914 have been demolished. Indeed, the Ladd House was designated due to its association with distinctive elements of neighborhood identity, being a tangible remnant of Loring Park's wealthy, single family heyday in the late 1800s. Restoring the building's historic use will help improve the property's integrity of association with its original single-family function.

The variance is necessary to alleviate undue hardship due to special conditions or circumstances unique to the property not created by the applicant. The property has an interior and exterior Landmark

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designation that might preclude major changes required to convert the building to a new use. The building could continue to be used as an institutional building, but it has remained vacant for several years during protracted efforts to sell the building. Permitting this single-family use is a reasonable request.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development recommends that the Heritage Preservation Commission adopt staff findings and **approve** the historic variance to use the property located at 131 Oak Grove Street as a single-family dwelling subject to the following conditions:

1. By ordinance, approvals are valid for a period of two years from the date of the decision. Upon written request and for good cause, the planning director may grant up to a one year extension if the request is made in writing no later than November 19, 2015.

Attachments:

1. Vicinity map
2. Plans
3. Public Comment